

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /069 W

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R 041315Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7928

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 2427

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV

SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY OVER KUWAITI AMIR'S HEALTH: FINANCIAL TIMES
BANNED

1. RESPONDING TO A FINANCIAL TIMES STORY (APRIL 27) WHICH
ALLEGED THAT THE KUWAITI AMIR'S HEALTH IS FAILING AND THAT THERE
IS RIVALRY WITHIN THE RULING FAMILY OVER SUCCESSION , MINISTER FOR
CABINET AFFAIRS HUSSEIN REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS (AFTER CABINET
MEETING MAY 1) THAT THE AMIR "ENJOYS GOOD HEALTH...BEYOND ANY DOUBT."
REFERRING TO FOREIGN PRESS REPORTS ON THE SUBJECT, MINISTER HUSSEIN
SAID THAT "KUWAIT REGRETS THE PUBLICATION OF SUCH SPECULATION."
HUSSEIN'S TATEMENT WAS HEADLINED BY ALL NEWSPAPERS ON MAY 2,
AND ON MAY 3 DAILY AL SIYASAH CARRIED HEADLINE STORY FROM ITS REPORTER

IN LONDON TO THE EFFECT THAT THE "WESTERN PRESS" IS TRYING TO CAUSE
INSTABILITY IN "ARAB OIL STATES" (KUWAIT AND SUDI ARABIA MENTIONED
SPECIFICALLY). ASSERTION IS THAT WESTERN PRESS HAS ALREADY
DESTABLIZED SOME AFRICAN STATES WITH FALSE STORIES OF RIVALRIES
"BETWEEN FIRST MAN AND SECOND MAN" IN SUCH STATES.

2. MAY 4 KUWAITI PRESS REPORTS THAT THE FINANCIAL TIMES "HAS BEEN
BANNED IN KUWAIT" ON ORDERS FROM DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER/
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MINISTER OF INFORMATION, JABER AL-ALI. DURING A DISCUSSION MAY 3,
JABER AL-ALI MENTIONED TO AMBASSADOR HIS ANNOYANCE WITH THE
"INACCURATE ARTICLE" WHICH APPEARED IN THE FINANCIAL TIMES OF
APRIL 27, REGARDING THE AMIR'S HEALTH AND ALLEGED FAMILY SQUABBLES
OVER SUCCESSION. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT REVEAL TO AMBASSADOR HIS
INTENTION TO BAN THE FINANCIAL TIMES, HE DREW HIS ATTENTION TO
THE MINISTER OF CABINET AFFAIRS HUSSEIN'S STATEMENT RE SOUNDNESS

OF AMIR'S HEALTH AND ASSURED HIM THAT THERE WAS NO DISSENSION OR COMPETITION AMONG THE RULING FAMILY. HE PARTICULARLY UNDERLINED HIS OWN HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH CROWN PRINCE SHAIKH JABER AL-AHMAD.

3. COMMENT: APRIL 27 ARTICLE DEALS BOTH WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT, THE HEALTH OF THEIR HEADS OF STATE, AND SUCCESSION. IT NOTES THE EXISTENCE OF ABDICATION RUMORS IN BOTH COUNTRIES RECENTLY AND SAYS THAT THE RESPECTIVE CROWN PRINCES ARE ABLE AND THAT THEY PROBABLY WOULD TAKE OVER WITHOUT "UPHEAVALS" SHOULD THE HEADS OF STATE DIE OR ABDICATE. IN THE CASE OF KUWAIT, IT NAMES THE LIKELY CONTENDERS FOR THE POSTS OF PRIME MINISTER AND CROWN PRINCE--IT LISTS THE SAME FEW MEN MENTIONED IN EMBASSY REPORTS OVER THE YEARS--AND ASSERTS THAT THERE IS "COMPETITION" AMONG THEM. THE ARTICLE IS LOW KEY AND CONTAINS NOTHING ON KUWAIT WHICH IS OTHER THAN COMMON GOSSIP AND TRADITIONAL SPECULATION HERE. THUS, THE BAN ON THE FINANCIAL TIMES SEEMS TO BE CURIOUSLY HARSH REACTION TO WHAT THE AUTHOR, ANTHONY MCDERMOTT, HAD TO SAY; BOTH WE AND THE BRITISH EMBASSY ARE WONDERING WHAT THE PRECISE REASONS FOR IT MIGHT BE. IN ANY EVENT, THE FINANCIAL TIMES WILL BE MISSED IN KUWAIT; IT IS WIDELY READ IN GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS CIRCLES AND IS PRBABLY THE MOST RESPECTED AND LOCALLY USEFUL FOREIGN NEWSPAPER. NO TIME LIMITE FOR THE BAN WAS MENTIONED, BUT WE FEEL IT WILL NOT LAST LONG. MAESTRONE

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